11:Marshall E-5 (1950-1955) 1958
FX10 Bushmen FX10
Kung

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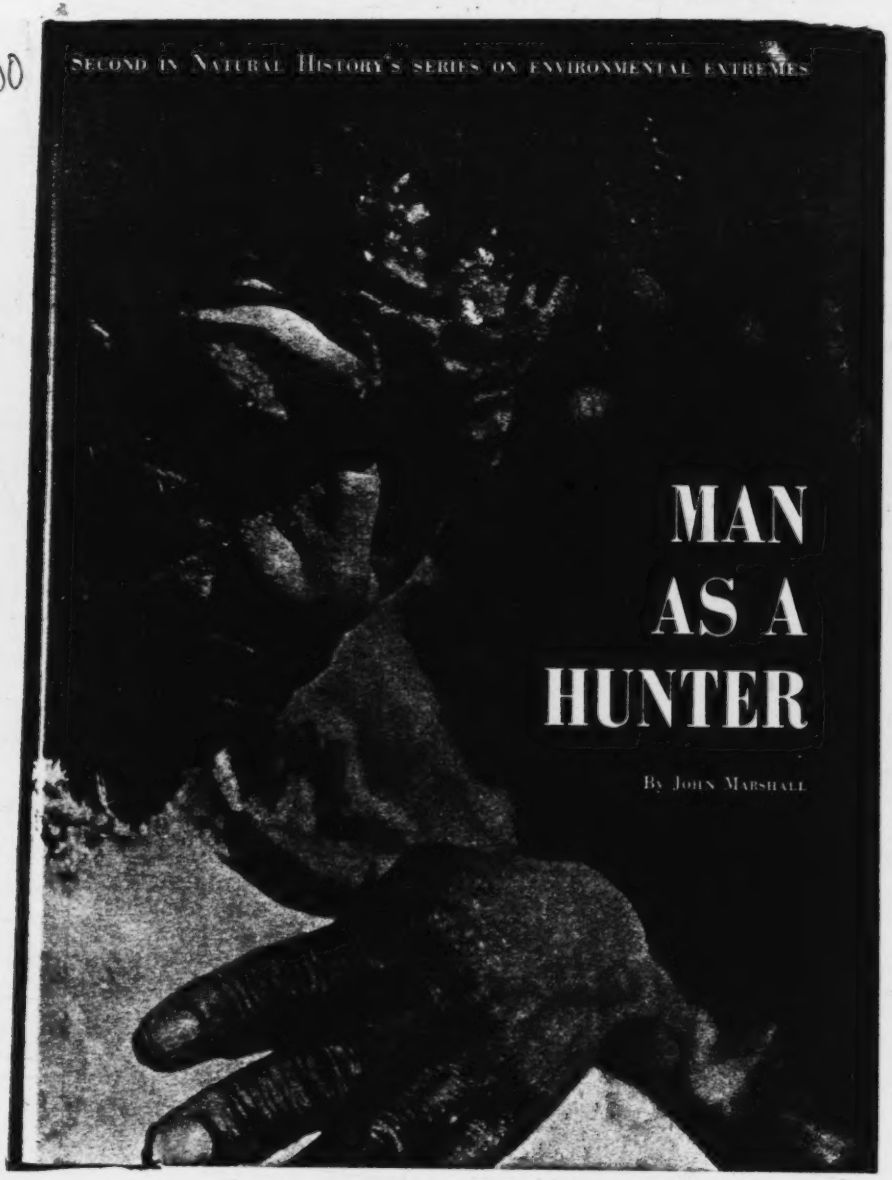

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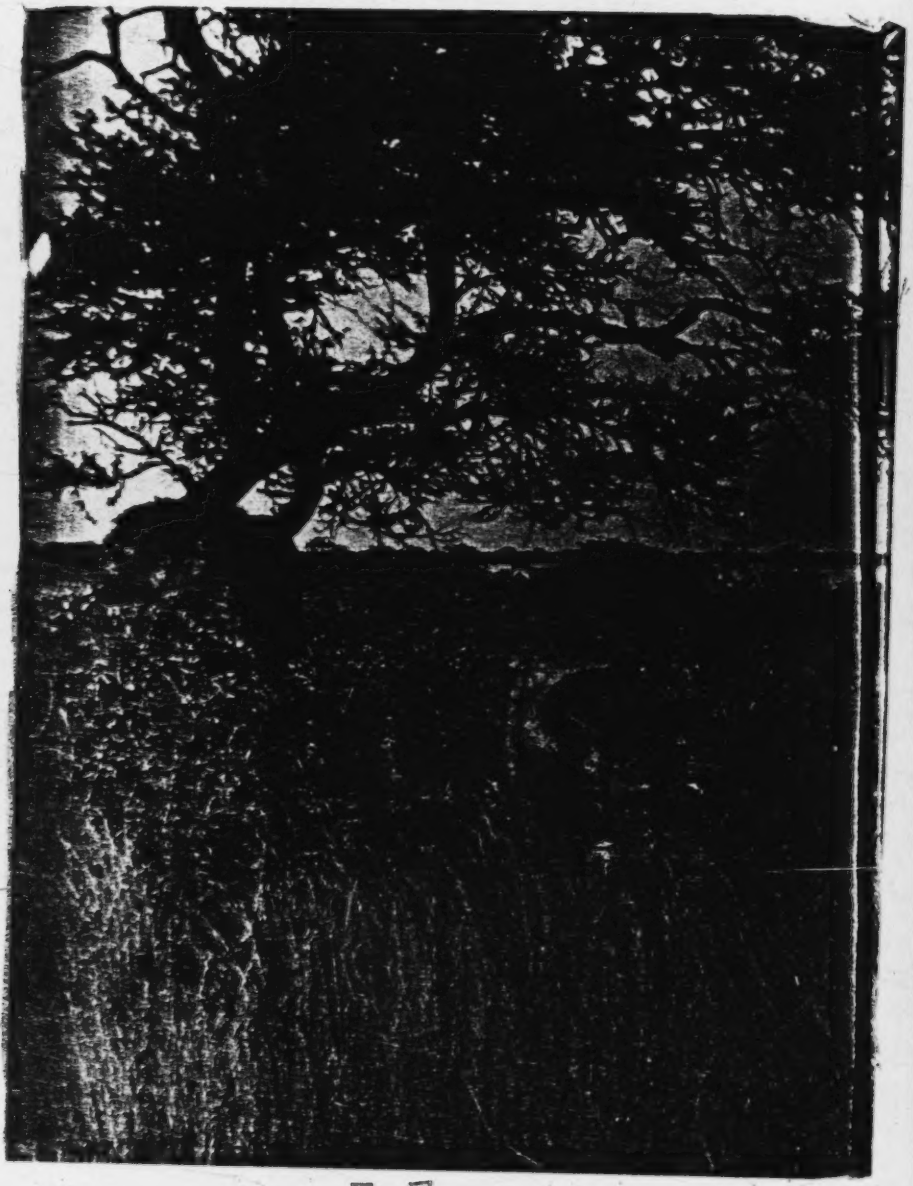

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!KUNG BAND'S CAMP, *left*, is set up in shelter of overhanging trees. The thousand !Kung in this area are divided into twenty-eight such nomadic bands.

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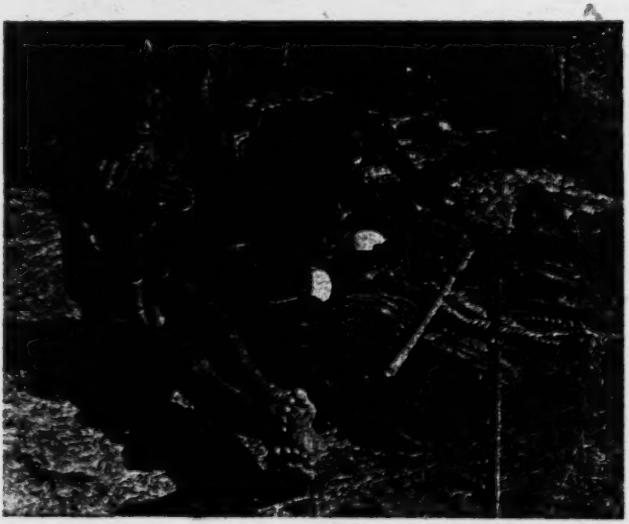
Hunting is mankind's oldest—and least rewarding—way of life. Among its last practitioners are the Kalahari Bushmen

PART I

A PEOPLE, small of stature, few in numbers, calling themselves "!Kung," but who are called "Bushmen" by others, live today in a tremendous depression, half-a-continent wide and sunken in the southern African plateau—by name, the Kalahari Desert Basin. They live on the huge floor of this Basin, near one of its imperceptible sides. It is an open land—large to the point of vagueness, under a limitless sky. There is a word used frequently by the other inhabitants of this Basin—mostly black-skinned peoples—to define the different cultural groups now living there. The word is "nation." One speaks of the Herero nation, the Chuana nations, the Okavango nations. To follow this usage, one would speak of the !Kung nation of *Nyae Nyae*—one among several Bushmen nations. [The prefix, (!), indicates one of the so-



WORLDLY GOODS of a !Kung family are arrayed, *above*, preparatory to moving camp. The number of belongings cannot exceed family's carrying capacity.

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called "clicks" that mark the speech of the Bushmen. Distinction is made between four classes of "click": the dental (/), lateral (//), palatal (≠), and alveolar (!)—Ed.]

But "nation" is a new word, recently arisen in the vocabulary of a country whose people are struggling to define themselves in present times. The !Kung, who know who they are, do not yet need it. For, besides !Kung, which they use rarely, they call themselves *Dzu/oassi*. *Dzu/oassi* can be interpreted as "the people" in opposition to "the animals," for example, or as "the perfect people," or, indeed, as "the only people."

Unlike other nations, the Bushmen practice no agriculture, domesticate no animals. They are hunting and gathering peoples. But all the nations—Bushmen, Bantu and white alike—who live in the Kalahari Basin must

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TREES AND SHRUBS of campsite provide convenient racks for family possessions, and even partial support for the sketchy *skerms* (screens) built in the dry winter, *above*, little more than bunches of grass caught on a few sticks.

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133 face its exigencies, for this sand-filled depression is distantly rimmed by mountains, and the mountains catch most of the clouds that might otherwise bring rain. The rain that does fall is sucked into the sand, so that there is little surface water and much of the Kalahari Basin is true desert.

137 ALTHOUGH true desert, the Kalahari is not a bare place: the face of the sand is hidden. Much of the desert is clothed with stalwart, similar bushes, most of them thorned. In places, dry forests grow slowly: the trees stand apart and the air between them is strangely still on days of wind. Grass covers the sand: in sweeps on the dry plains, in glens in the bush; grass grows on dunes gathered long ago by patient wind, and in the silent valleys, called *omuramba*'s. In a younger, greener time that has come and gone since man first lived in southern

137 Africa, these valleys once flowed—draining water from the high edges into the Basin. Now the sand has wandered into these valleys also.

132 There are four seasons in the Kalahari, two are brief. Winter begins in May and lasts through September. It is a healthful season. Of the foods available to gatherers in winter, roots are the most abundant. The earth is dry: the days are warm and clear, but cold in the shade; the nights are chill. Temperatures sink to 20° F. and below when the night wind turns, blowing from the antarctic south. On some hazeless nights, when the empty air seems insufficient protection from the cold of space, the morning ground will be wet with heavy dew. However, the smoke from a thousand African veld fires often thickens the skies of noon, reddens the setting sun and keeps the nights warmer and the earth dry.

At the end of September, clouds be-

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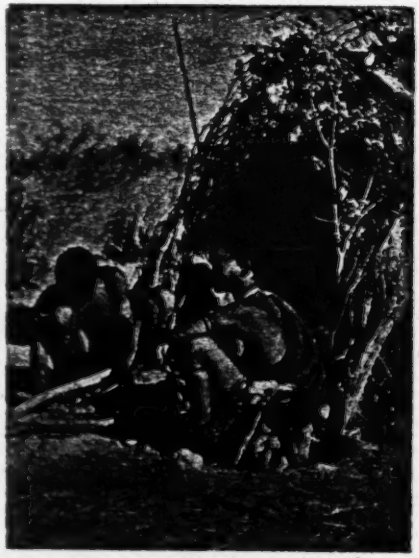

FOR RAINY SEASON, the open-fronted grass shelters are more substantial.

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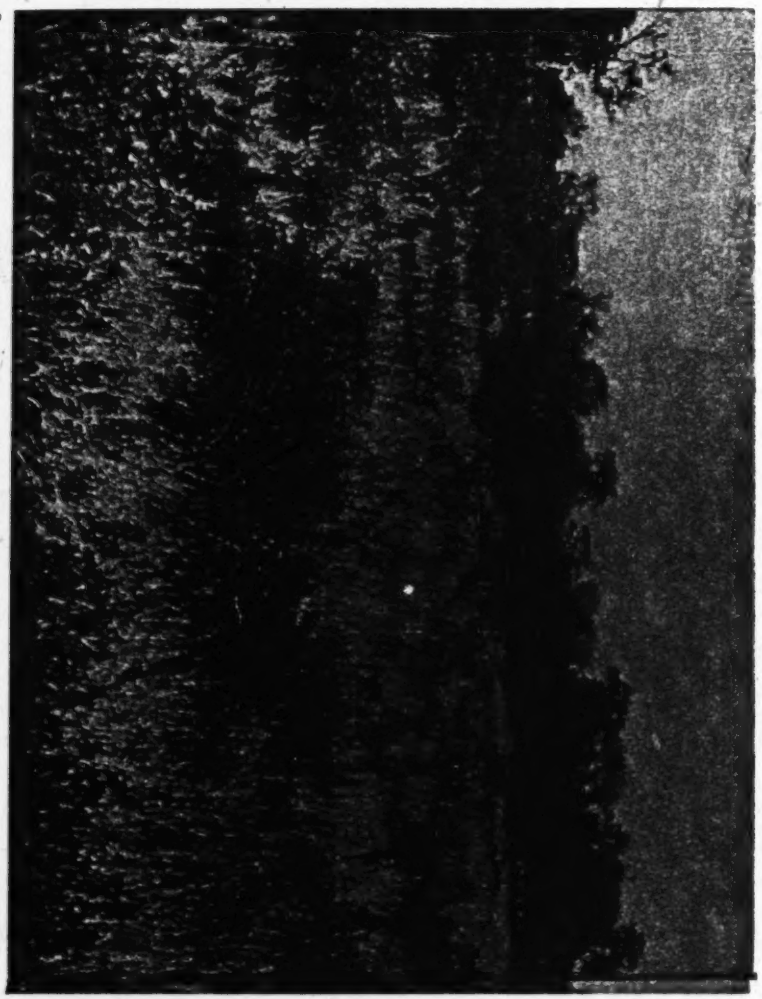

COLLECTION OF FOOD, in contrast to hunting, is women's work among the !Kung. Almost every day, they leave camp to gather *veldkos* (roots, berries, nuts and the smallest animals) in the wild bush. The basic tool is the digging

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stick, fashioned by the man of the family from a tree branch. Children soon learn, by watching, to identify more than a hundred edible wild plants. *Above*, four women, one with a young child, set off across the veld for food.

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!Kung mother, collecting near camp, cradles a suckling daughter in a fold of her skin kaross, while her toddler son carries along a stick of his own.

[p. 11]

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132 gin to tower in the afternoons. They wear over the desert from the east and are usually gone by morning. But should they encounter the right conditions, the local rains that fall from these clouds—the "little rains"—bring the spring of the year. This is the sudden season of thunderstorms. The storms are like gods walking in the desert, each attending to a narrow path with violence and rain. In the quiet, after their passing, many plants bloom—small flowers and edible greens.

[136] SPRING is also the season of heat. Myriads of flies, the year's crop, now hatch. The heat increases toward

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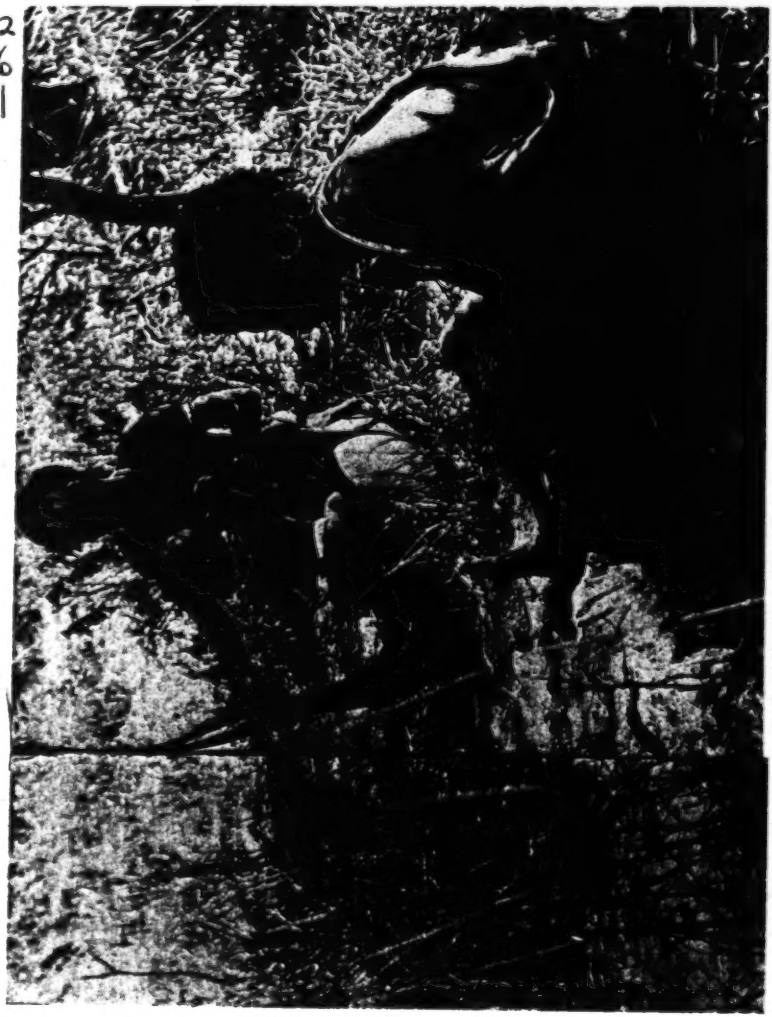

Most roots are dug up for food, but the ones held out, above, are valued for their bark. When it is pounded and rubbed on, it turns the skin red.

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summer and, although clouds continue to form early in the afternoon, often no rain falls. November and December pass in heat and privation for the people. Temperatures rise above 100° F. not long after the brief dawn, as the sun mounts, close and huge, bringing the heat of day. Many of the blooms of the "little rains" wither in November, as do many young greens. The roots have sent their substance into vines; now the loose skins of the roots lie collapsed around inedible fiber. Spring means blooming of plants, but spring is ardent and quickly over: many of the desert's flowers have only a few days in which to flourish.

LITTLE ESCAPES the women's eyes in their intense search for food, *below*. Even small animals—like turtles and grasshoppers—are carefully gathered.

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HUNTER'S LIFE is not all hunger and privation. *Above*, a young !Kung belle amuses herself with stringed instrument.

BUT AGE COMES SOON: bracelets, beads and pendants that adorn this mature !Kung matron contrast with seamed face.

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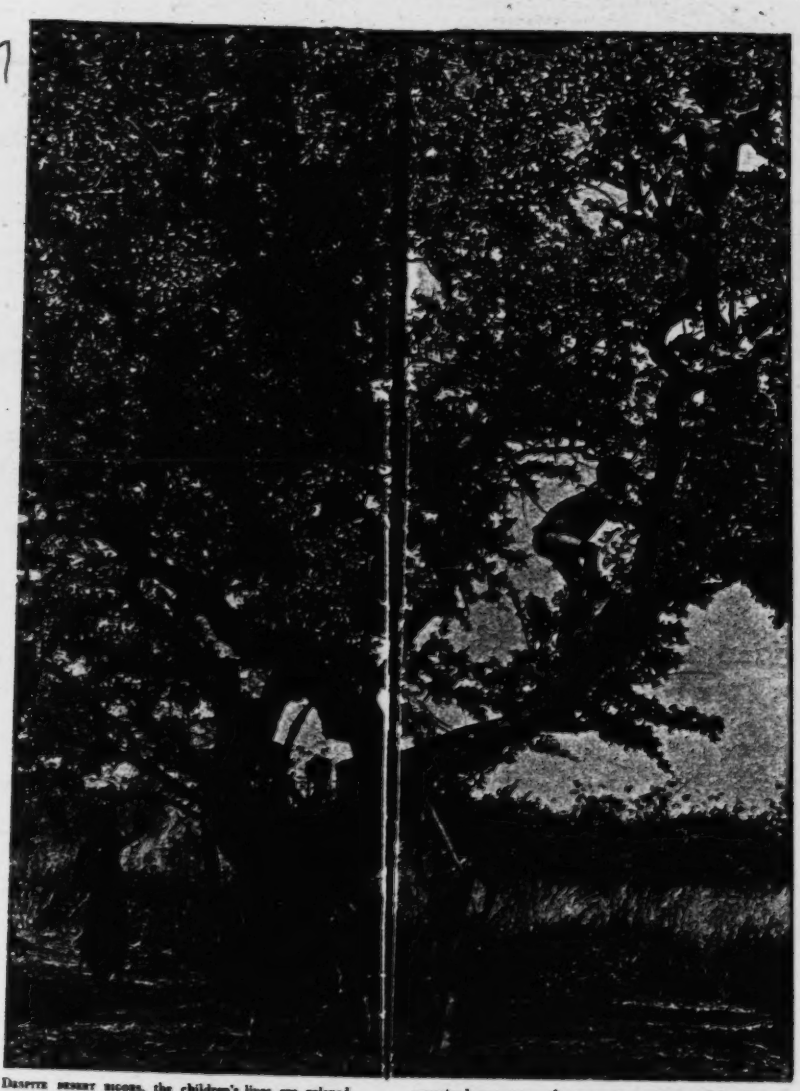

Despite secret access, the children's lives are relaxed ones, largely lacking in formal instruction and without organized pressure on the young to assume an adult role. Here, a gathering of children from one !Kung camp enjoy

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organized pressure on the young to assume an adult role. Here, a gathering of children from one !Kung camp enjoy themselves in the shade of a tree—one swinging, others scampering, "follow-the-leader" fashion, in the branches.

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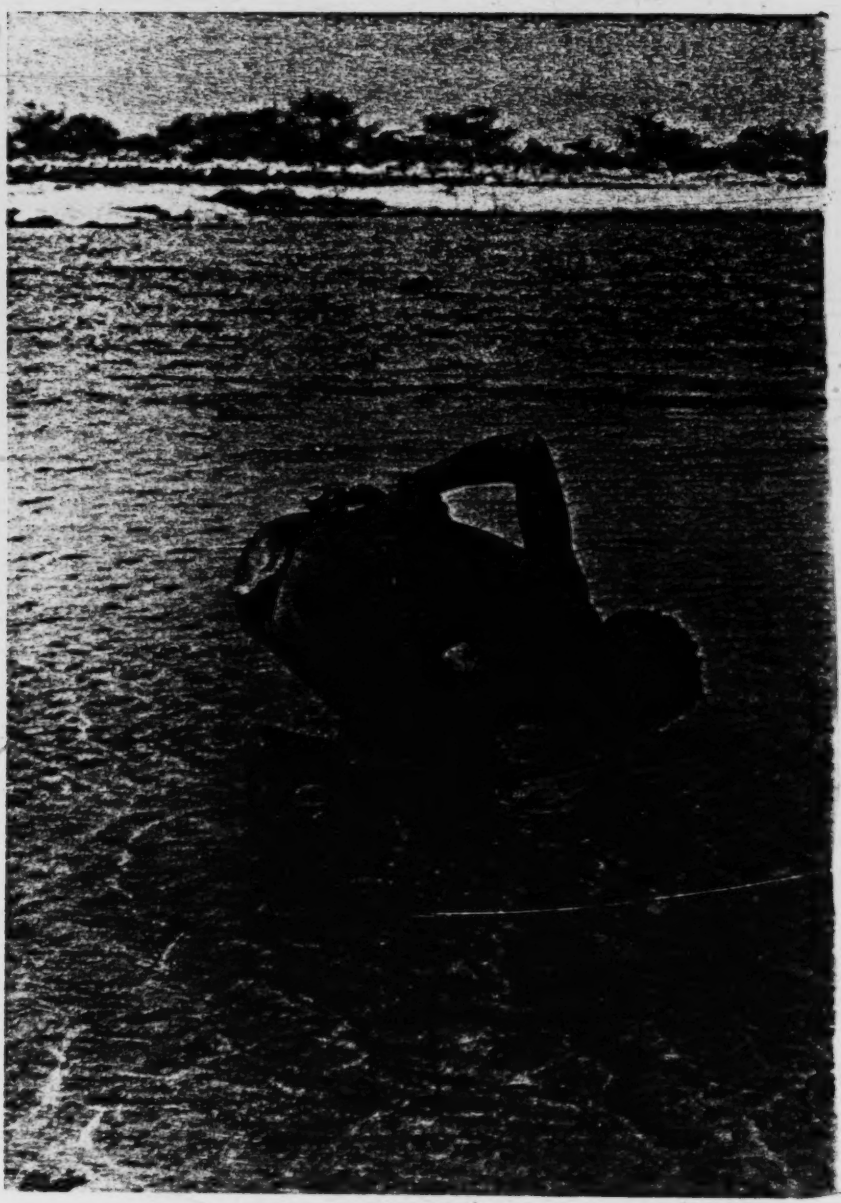

[8.19]

132 LATE in December or early in January the rains of summer—the "big rains"—begin. This is the season of water. Water collects in the hollows of the land; it seeps into the pans, changing them into shallow lakes; it melts the baked clay in the *omuramba* bottoms, and turns the Kalahari green.

132 This is the season when two nuts, the *tsi* and the *mangetti*—the most im-
262 portant and abundant of the wild
137 desert foods—begin to mature. By March, the *mangetti* forests sound with the falling nuts. Beside the summer storms—when water piles up uselessly on the reverberating earth—days on end are cloudy and, sometimes, a fine mist falls over parts of the northern Kalahari through the day and into the night. Now, the people eat many fruits. In the deeps of green thickets, ponderous flowers droop on slender
[164] vines. Spring and summer, the times of bounty, are also the seasons of disease.

132 By the end of April, the afternoon skies begin to clear, the air dries, the wind seeks. It is autumn. In April, the *tsi* nuts ripen and the pods split, turning out their brown wealth. The many desert roots cease their activity and become firm and full, safe in

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WATER IS KEY to life in the Kalahari: only ten permanent waterholes. Above, in all the !Kung territory, there are a man fills his ostrich-egg "bottle."

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For the rest of the year, above, they fill their eggshells from permanent waterholes, dig for water roots.

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FEWNESS OF NUMBERS in desert's vast expanse may help account for characteristic !Kung habit of huddling together in company, as in case of this group of children, *above*. Items of personal adornment — eggshell disks, often in strings with seed beads, and hoops of traded wire — show parental affection.

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HUDDLING HABIT is noticeable again in this gathering of women and children as a !Kung *mother*, foreground, is still at breast.

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132 themselves for the winter and in a state most suitable for food. The desert pales. Day and night, water evaporates from the pans; first becoming a film, then less than a film, with only the damp clay glistening. One noon, the clay begins to wrinkle in the sun. By June, the earth is dry: the land is fast and quietly held by winter.

132 731 Such would be a perfect round of seasons. In the periods of drought that have come every few years in the recent past, however, there have been no such perfect seasons and all living things have, of necessity, fastened tenaciously to the drying earth and held on. Even in normal years, the weather is unbalanced: large areas of the Kalahari may be flooded, while others receive a sprinkling of rain in what amounts to drought conditions. In this land, and through these seasons, the !Kung nation lives.

[131] 174 THE AREA in which the !Kung now live is called *Nyae Nyae*. How long they have lived there is not

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174 known. At one time, Bushmen lived throughout Africa from as far north as Angola and Tanganyika to, southward, the Cape of Good Hope. This was a time when few peoples shared that part of the continent. In southern Africa, beside the many Bushmen nations, there were Hottentots and pre-Bantu Negroes—some of whom were hunters and some of whom practiced agriculture. In the distances between the nations grew years of peace.

About five centuries ago, larger, stronger, Bantu-speaking peoples, who had cattle to pasture, entered southern Africa from the north. They came in two prongs, like the horns of a bull, prodding down the eastern and western highlands. In search of grazing land, these Bantus were themselves driven south by defeat in wars then current on the plains of East Africa. The established peoples of the south—the Bushmen, the Hottentots and pre-Bantus—were dislocated by this push and began to move, themselves. This flux has yet to come completely to rest.

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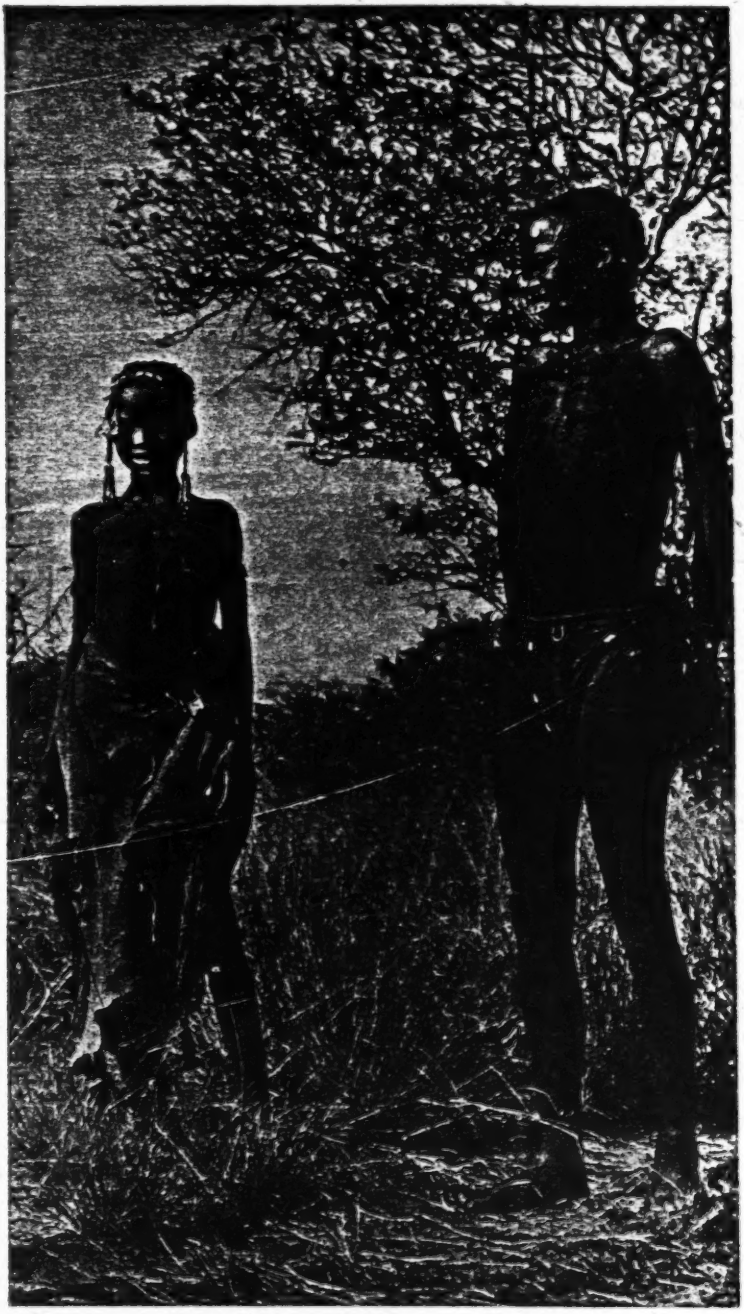

YOUNG COUPLE stands, shyly smiling, at outskirts of *werft*. Marriage among the !Kung, as in the case here, often occurs before the girls reach puberty.

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SKIN KAROSS, being stitched, *above*, is the !Kung's most important garment, while nuts from the *tsi* and *mangetti* trees (in pot, *below*) are chief food.

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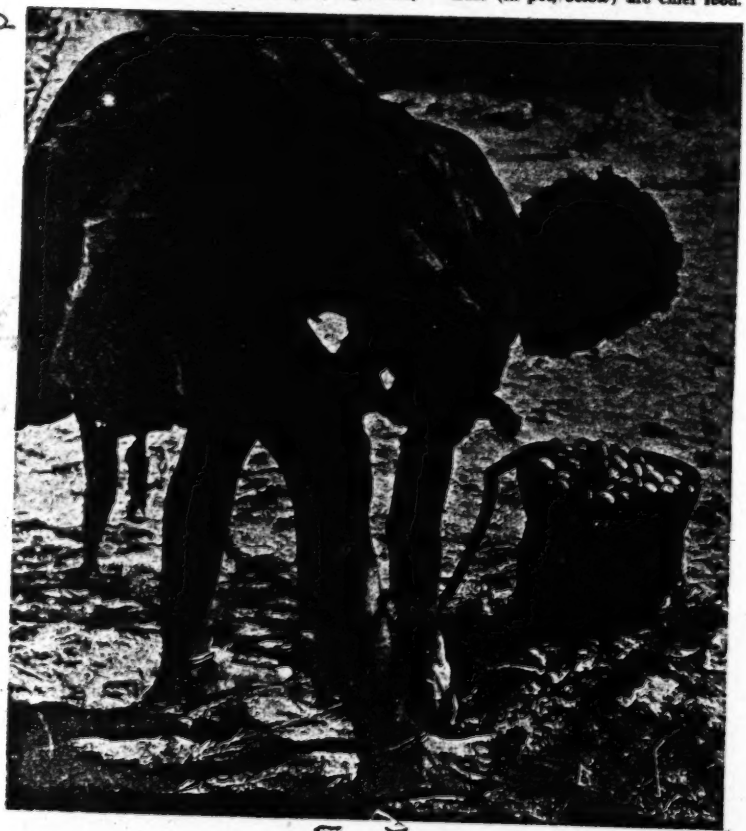

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In such disturbed times, the Bushmen fare ill. They are not, and probably were not ever, a warlike people. Their society is not constructed for war, their culture dampens war. Yet, now, wars and battles began to scatter across the land, as groups of people—large and small, Bantu armies, itinerant raiders, the remnants of tiny nations and the dispossessed—marched and wandered in their search of conquest or safe distant places.

Some Bushmen nations were driven into pockets in the hills, where they died slowly. Some stayed on their land and were decimated and made slaves. Some resisted and, as one who spoke of his people told me: "We were soldiers in those days." Their armies changed into marauder bands that sometimes fought and often ran. Of these, the Heikum were an example—an embittered, scattered nation of travelers on the then uncertain grasslands of South West Africa. When, at

FIREWOOD FOR CAMP is another prize to be sought from the veld. Here, two fine logs are being carried back to the *werft* for fuel. Besides fires for cooking, the !Kung need them at night for warmth, since temperatures after sunset often fall well below freezing. Each family shelter has its own fire.

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174 last, white and black met,—raiding one another for cattle across the Fish River—and the time of the Zulu and the Voortrekker was near, the classic period of the Bushmen was over.

131 THE AREA called *Nyae Nyae* lies on the border between South West Africa and Bechuanaland. It covers about 10,000 square miles, between 18°55′ and 21°0′ South latitude and 19°50′ to 21°25′ East longitude. In 133 the center of this area is a ring of *kalk* pans. *Nyae Nyae* is actually the name the !Kung gave to this ring of pans, although I have applied it to the whole area occupied by the !Kung nation.

136 There is game round these pans and, in small groups, everywhere in *Nyae Nyae*. Wild roots grow in the 137 bush that shrouds much of the territory. There is *tsi* in the south, while 133 *mangetti* forests crowd along the crests of white sand dunes in the south and east, and spread over the north. Their

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137 nuts drop abundantly to the ground every year. There are ten permanent
133 waterholes—some clustered around the ring of the pans, the others set like infrequent jewels in a low limestone ridge along the eastern border. During the rains, small pans and hollows hold embroidered pools. Hollow trees also catch water and keep it until it turns brown, while several kinds of water roots can be counted on all year.

174 Until recently, few came and none but Bushmen stayed for long in *Nyae Nyae*, for there is not enough water to attract pastoral peoples, and the soils are not the best for crops. The !Kung say: "We have always been here, drinking the *Nyae Nyae* waters." Perhaps this "always" began at about the time when the western Bantu horn was moving southward through Ovamboland. All one can say for sure is that they came, possibly seeking sanctuary in the empty spaces of the Kalahari, found, in *Nyae Nyae*, a quiet

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174 place, and stayed. In *Nyae Nyae*, the !Kung have since lived on unchanged
[411 —replacing only their bone arrow-points with metal ones, made from
177] the nails and wire that filtered into the desert after the Europeans' entry into South West Africa.

178 The !Kung nation cannot so live for much longer. Already their last lands are being occupied by the Herero nation—Bantu-speakers—who say: "The Bushmen are like our children. We feel obligated to care for them." It seems likely that, in a few years, these lands will be farmed by white people. Then, if the past of other Bushmen is any omen, some !Kung will become farm laborers, some will contract syphilis, some will die and some will breed. Few will marry.

000 So MUCH for the little history and the brief geography. How do the !Kung live in *Nyae Nyae?* Human ecology is the study of the relation-

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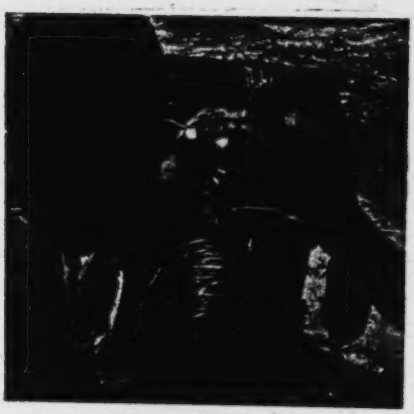

YOUNG MOTHER bows her head as ornament for ear lobe is twisted to shape.

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ship between man and his natural environment. In such a relationship, two directions of cause and effect are implied. These two directions may be understood by two terms—adaption and control. Adaption means the effect wrought by the environment upon the body or the culture of man. Control is the effect wrought upon the environment by man, his body and his culture. In the one case, man conforms to the environment. In the other, man conforms the environment to his needs.

182

THERE IS no ecological situation where either adaptation or control prevails to the exclusion of the other, for the fact of man's presence changes an environment, and the most effective technology, the most developed society, are—in part—responses to an environment. Every ecological relationship is a welter of compromise. Yet, there are extremes. If we take Western technological culture as one extreme—with control prevailing and America the exponent—the !Kung might be considered the opposite extreme, for the !Kung control their environment scarcely at all.

To the !Kung, in their environment, there are available a certain number of natural resources, in a certain geographical pattern. There are also available a certain number of !Kung. They have a culture. Living within their culture, they are able to exploit their environment. The first aspect of this ecological relationship is the fairly obvious relationship between !Kung technology and environment.

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With considerable empirical knowledge, the !Kung have arrived at workable solutions to the problems of subsistence. By means of their technology, they have managed to satisfy their basic needs and their many wants of life (at least, they satisfied them until they were exposed to the wealth of white men). The fact that their population is limited because of their technology is one result of this adaptation—of which infanticide is an occasional expression. That they live to all intents and purposes from day to day—having no real measure of surplus in the form of stored crops and

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beasts ready to slaughter—is another indication that the !Kung have largely adapted to their environment. But the contrasting fact that the !Kung live in *Nyae Nyae* as easily as they do also indicates some measure of environmental control.

THE more complex aspects of the !Kung ecological relationship exist in areas other than their simple technology. That the !Kung are able to exploit their environment with a certain degree of efficiency is due in some measure to the structure of their society. Thus, the second aspect of the

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ecological relationship is this one: the relationship between a certain number of natural resources, arranged in a certain environment, and a society that has developed in the presence of these resources and whose members are dependent on them.

Of course, their society did not come into being because the !Kung needed it to exploit their environment, nor is that society shaped only in accordance with environmental dictates. Indeed, some elements of !Kung society seem to exist in spite of the environment. There is reason to believe that their society has not basically

182 changed through periods when there was more water, more game, and probably more *veldkos*—the wild vegetable products of the land, gathered by the women of the bands – in South Africa, although this point might be debated on grounds that the !Kung depended more on hunting in previous periods. But it is that aspect of !Kung social structure, the functioning of which clearly seems to facilitate exploitation of their environment by means of their technology, that we shall discuss. These manifestations appear primarily adaptive in nature, although control is also discernible.

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WOMEN OF WERPT gather children and possessions in preparation for march to a new campsite. A band can travel about ten miles a day, gathering food as it goes. The !Kung move in annual patterns: staying near waterholes in dry winter, visiting *mongetti* forests in moist summer, and *tsi* areas in fall.

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DELOUSING is a courtesy among kinsmen: the salty-tasting lice are eaten.

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There are about 1,000 !Kung—gathered into 28 bands—who build their ephemeral camps, or *werft*'s, separately in an area of 10,000 square miles. The houses in the *werft*'s are of grass, pressed over a framework of sticks, making small quarter-shells, with their backs to the prevailing wind. Gossamer things, made of the same grass that sways and crowds against their doors, they are positioned in a loose pattern according to their occupants' kinship, and all are held—finally—by the headman, who builds his shelter under the tallest tree.

[622]

From a little distance, when the sound of voices is lost on the wind, one would not know a *werft* was near. The people never return to the same *werft*—preferring to build anew and saying it would not be safe from the spirits of the dead, or sanitary, to do so. Perhaps, also, they find it sad to see the little houses toppling, day by day, into the grass of the new year.

462

AS A STARTING POINT, labor among the !Kung is divided between two basic subsistence activities—hunting game and gathering *veldkos*. Men hunt, because their bodies are better suited to the chase. Women gather, because they could not leave their children for the long periods of hunting that men both enjoy and endure.

222

Women's work—the technology of gathering—is simple and adaptable: the tools are easily acquired, the methods quickly learned. The constant necessity to provide and the almost daily edge of effort slowly bends the

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JOHN MARSHALL is one of a family that has been studying the Bushmen for nearly a decade, in expeditions to South West Africa by the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

222 !Kung women, who are slender-armed and do this monotonous work to the end of their lives. All roots—a major food—are gathered in identical fashion. The implement for this is a digging stick—made usually by a woman's husband from any of a number of hardwoods: the bark is peeled from a branch, a point is whittled sharp. Women, squatting, dig narrow holes in the earth with these sticks, and tug until the root they have reached comes free. Berries are picked—high ones jostled down with sticks and sought for carefully among the grass stems. Nuts are collected on the ground.

[412]

224 SMALL ANIMALS, such as tortoises and even grasshoppers, are sometimes captured by the women and brought home in the evening—such small creatures are also considered *veldkos*. The women, too, will kill snakes, even puff adders. When they see a puff adder, they gather around it in a little crowd, their high laughter tinkling while they drop large, heavy things on its flat head.

222 461 Averaged over a year, women gather on four or five days of each week—the number of days depending

[p. 41]

222 461 on the season. In the long days of wilting between the October spring and the January summer, food is scarce and the women may go out every day into the failing veld, leaving their *werft* early in the morning and returning late in the afternoon. All 222 422 593 that a woman gathers belongs to her alone, and of course is shared with her family. She feeds her husband, her children and often a visitor or two, at her own hearth. No formal instruction 222 868 857 is practiced among the !Kung, with the possible exception of certain kinds of religious teaching and what might be called an occasional hunting school. Learning to gather comes from the children's observation of the more experienced women. Girls soon learn to [824] recognize more than a hundred kinds of edible plants that grow in *Nyae Nyae*, as well as the seasons and places in which these plants grow. They learn to see tiny, shriveled root vines coiled around thorns in the thickets and, in the process, develop fine powers of observation. Possibly complementary to this lack of formal instruction, no formal pressure is exerted on young people to take up adult roles. Girls, if they wish, accompany their mothers on gathering trips. If they do not, they rarely feel guilty. A girl usually be- [582] gins to feel responsible soon after she marries, which is often before puberty. But only when she has children of her own does a woman see the world through the eyes of a provider.

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With the summer rains, the nuts of the *mangetti* forests – related to the almond – begin to mature. The !Kung arrive as soon as possible to start collecting. In winter,

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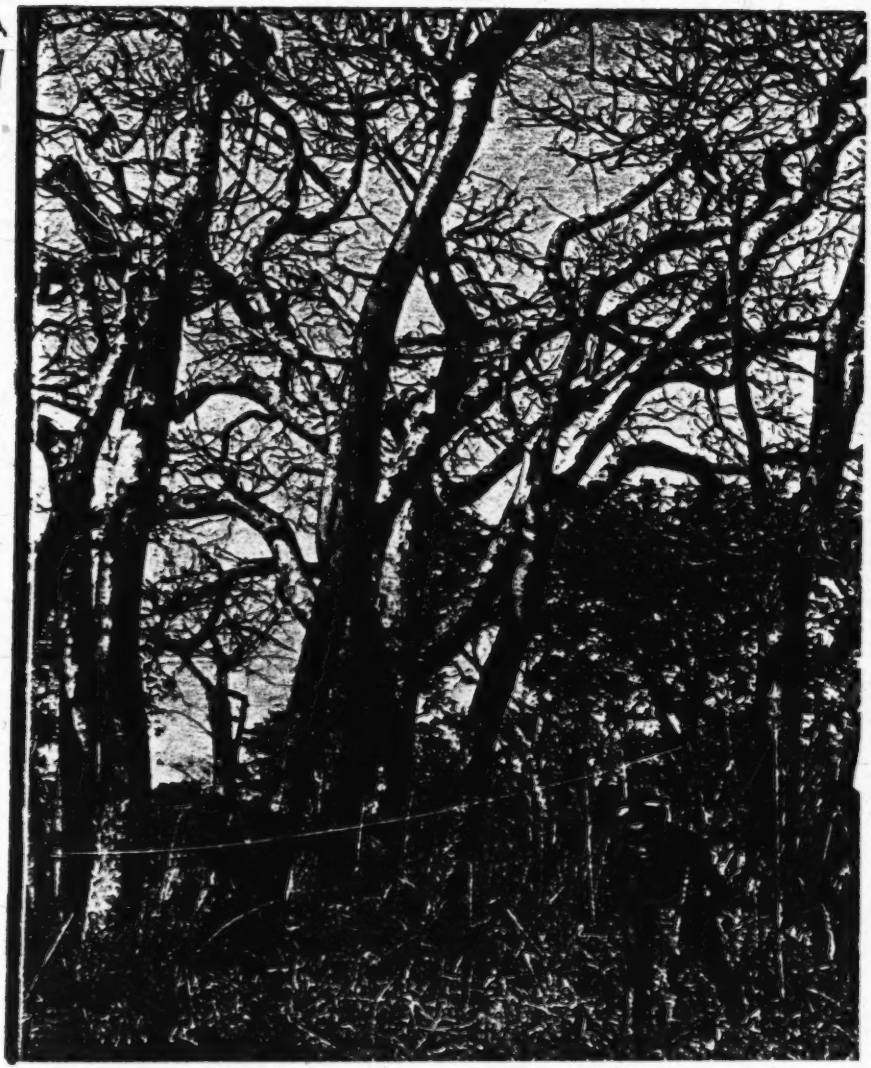

With the summer rains, the nuts of the mongongo forests – related to the almond – begin to mature. The !Kung arrive as soon as possible to start collecting, pay later visits as well. In winter, above, they search again.

[p.44]

11: Marshall E-5 (1950-1955) 1958 FX10 Bushmen FX10
Kung

HUNTSMEN OF NYAE NYAE

The !Kung still practice man's oldest craft

By JOHN MARSHALL

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HUNTING is the work of men. !Kung hunters range the land, seeking the agile game. The men walk rapidly, never lowering their eyes, making sure of the awkward ground with their dextrous feet. They glance swiftly over the distances of the country and, with their good vision and knowledge of what to look for, see any moving thing. As girls learn gathering, boys learn most of hunting on their own. They hunt little birds in the grass around the *werft* houses. They impale beetles with tiny arrows shot from toy bows. Tracking, which is the most difficult part

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CHIEF WEAPONS OF !Kung are bow and poisoned arrows (in quiver, above).

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11:Marshall E-5 (1950-1955) 1958
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224 of hunting, is learned last of all.
868 Hunters must be able to recognize the spoor of one wounded wildebeest out of a herd of fifty, and follow that track across desert ground which is almost as hard as stone.

224 The usual techniques of hunting are well adapted to the Kalahari terrain and, except on rare occasions, do not change—no matter what the animal may be. The !Kung hunt an eland and a duiker in the same manner; the idea is to get to the animal just as quickly as possible. The hunters feel that the longer they creep and wait, the more time the

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At end of chase, with quarry stricken, spears may be used on big game.

[p. 47]

224 animal will have to decide what to do. I have seen a man, using this principle, run crouched across a perfectly open flat, with grass no higher than his knees, and come within twenty yards of a wildebeest who was watching him all the time. Of course the men use cover when they can, but they use it quickly and deftly, keeping on their feet and running bent and bunched so that their arms will not wave and attract unnecessary attention. Although their [411] arrows are true and straight, they are unfeathered and therefore not very accurate. At fifty yards, a !Kung hunter can only feel sure of hitting a kudu somewhere.

Among the less frequently used techniques of hunting are trapping, the use of blinds built near the pans (manned at night during the rains) and a technique of running down fat elands in the dry season when, what

[p.48]

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Mr. Marshall has participated in all six expeditions to the Kalahari by Harvard's Peabody Museum. Two of the expeditions were in association with the Smithsonian Institution.

224 with the heat and exertion, the portly animals suffer a kind of stroke and have to take to the shade to recover. There, puffing and dizzy, the exhausted elands can be butchered by the deep-breathing hunters.

[223] The trap is a spring-pole snare, of which exists a small version for birds and a larger version for small bucks. Such trapping is usually practiced only by young boys, and even they seem to do it rarely, so that what could amount to an important food source is neglected by the !Kung. The men would rather be gone after the big game, absorbed in the heat and chance of hunting,

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HUNTER'S BOOTY, in addition to meat for the pot, includes much-needed raw materials for !Kung economy. Skins of smaller animals are cut into the breech-clouts worn by the men, and, *above*, are sometimes ingeniously peeled off, almost in one piece, and turned into bags, with the legs serving as straps.

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[P. 57]

224 than to be squatting around the edges of the pans, making little guises with sticks and string into which guinea fowl invariably fall.

224 The technology of hunting is the most complex in !Kung culture, and
278 the most involved aspect of that technology is their amazing poison. Without it, the little unfeathered arrows, driven by a light bow, would be useless against big game. With the poison, a !Kung hunter could kill an elephant although, perhaps fortunately, for both, the two seldom encounter one another.

224 THERE are four kinds of poison—a
278 root (which is rarely used), two
825 grubs and the pod of a tree. One of the two kinds of grub is the larva of an unidentified beetle that lives in a bush; the other is the larva of a beetle that lives in certain Murula trees, identified as *Diamphidia sim-*

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plex. This identity, however, is complicated by the presence of still a third beetle, a parasitic one that apparently lives on the grubs of *Diamphidia simplex*, so that it is not now clear *which* is the poisonous grub. The Bushmen are aware of the parasite and feel that its grub does contain poison. They say it "runs around and runs away." They may be speaking of the beetle, for it is difficult to imagine a grub running, and the grub may be so similar to the young *Diamphidia* that the !Kung simply confuse the two. Lastly, still a fourth insect—smaller, and hairy—said to become easily inflamed, is occasionally encountered among the grubs. It is possible that this is the insect that has a poisonous larva: in any case, somewhere in the community is a poisonous grub, and how the Bushmen found it we have no idea.

Assuming *Diamphidia* to be the

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BAGS FOR FOOD, above, like eggshells for water, give !Kung some freedom in moving. Food may be brought to water or water carried far into the desert.

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poison-bearer, its cycle is somewhat as follows: the beetle lays its eggs in the Murula tree leaves. Hatching in the rains, the grubs migrate down the trunk, progressing through a number of growth stages. Finally, they make their cocoons under the ground near the tree. In these cocoons, they struggle through metamorphosis and emerge as small, bravely-colored beetles in the New Year's rains, providing the Bushmen have not already dug them up. The hunters know the particular trees frequented by the beetles and make expeditions to them at least twice a year to replenish their supply. Then the grubs are dug up, and used on the spot or kept in their cocoons, depending on the man's needs.

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The poisoning of !Kung arrows is a long process, with a number of variations. The most common poison is a mixture of the grub and the previously mentioned tree-pod. The grubs are crushed and the pod is warmed until its contents melt slightly and can be crushed with the grubs. This mixture is thinned with the copious spit which results from chewing any of a variety of barks and is then smeared on the foreshaft of the arrow—but cleaned immaculately off

[p. 53]

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the point, for the slightest prick, the least bit of poison getting in such a wound, would cause death.

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Depending on where the poisoned arrow hits, a small buck can die in a morning, a man in a few hours, a giraffe in four to five days. There is nothing that can be done for a man, short of amputating a limb or immediately excising the wound and cutting the nearby flesh to let the blood drain. Yet, the poison has no effect upon the game's meat. One can even eat the mixture with relative impunity: it must enter the bloodstream directly to be deadly.

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As subsistence activities, the men's and women's roles—hunting and gathering—are of unequal weight. Almost eighty per cent of the people's food is *veldkos*, more abundant than game in *Nyae Nyae*, and far more easily acquired. If from one summer to the next, a man kills twelve antelope, he feels he has had a good year.

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But, despite its relatively minor subsistence value, hu[illegible]ng is extremely important in !Kung culture. It has developed its body of technology, acquired a large tradition of beliefs, fostered a wealth of knowledge, and

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LARGE HIDE IS STAKED OUT, above, to be cured. This may become a cloak (*karosa*), the most important !Kung garment.

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MEAT FROM THE CHASE is shared by all among the band. An old woman, *below*, is skinning her portion of an ostrich.

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become both the measure of a man's ability and a test of his readiness to marry. Part of the explanation may come from the passion in hunting. Like their fires, the tales of hunting burn brightly for the !Kung in the night, warming their memories. Of equal or greater significance is the !Kung craving for meat and undoubtedly for protein. Unlike the sharing of *veldkos*, limited to the nuclear family, a complex system of distribution insures that everyone in the *werft* will get a share of all game killed. This is done, they say, simply to prevent jealousy and the inevitable renunciations that go with it. The !Kung declare "We are a jealous people" and they try to keep jealousy at a minimum, for they fear it.

Still another aspect of hunting—perhaps the most important in terms of subsistence—is the by-products it provides. Sinew is used for thongs

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[p. 56]

237 and bowstrings. horn makes spoons and small containers: most needed of all are the skins—converted into bags and nets for carrying, and into clothes. Men wear only a breech-
291 clout. Women wear modesty aprons,
281 often one in front and one behind, as well as a piece of soft skin, clasped
[841] between their buttocks and thighs, when menstruating. Both men and women wear *kaross*'s. The *kaross*, or skin cloak, is the most important garment and everyone tries to have one. If a man has only one *kaross*, and he is a good man, he will give it to his wife and do without—for, to a woman, a *kaross* is essential. In it, she is modest. In it, she carries the
[482] roots she has gathered in the day and the baby who must go where she goes. Her *kaross* is her warmth at night, her softness on the cold ground. It breaks the blind wind and roofs away the narrow rain.

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IN ANNUAL CEREMONY, above, a girl is guided as she lifts a tsi nut from the fire. She is now free to eat tsi for a year.

[p. 58]

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312 TEN permanent waterholes, as we have seen, occur in two areas—around the ring of pans in the east center of *Nyae Nyae*, and along the eastern border. To the west, beyond the limit of the pans, there is no water in the long dry seasons. Around each permanent waterhole, the *veldkos* near enough to be gathered in a day are considered by the !Kung to be an integral part of that waterhole. This means that such a waterhole includes both the water itself and all the *veldkos* within a circle with a radius of some four miles. This area might be called a certain waterhole's "district," taking its name from the waterhole. When a man mentions a waterhole, he usually has such a district in mind.

222 484 Yet neither the *veldkos* in these districts nor the *veldkos* scattered between the districts, nor the game, which wanders, constitute the main

FIRE IS MADE, *below*, with a drill. Upright stick is rolled between palms, one end socketed in another piece of wood.

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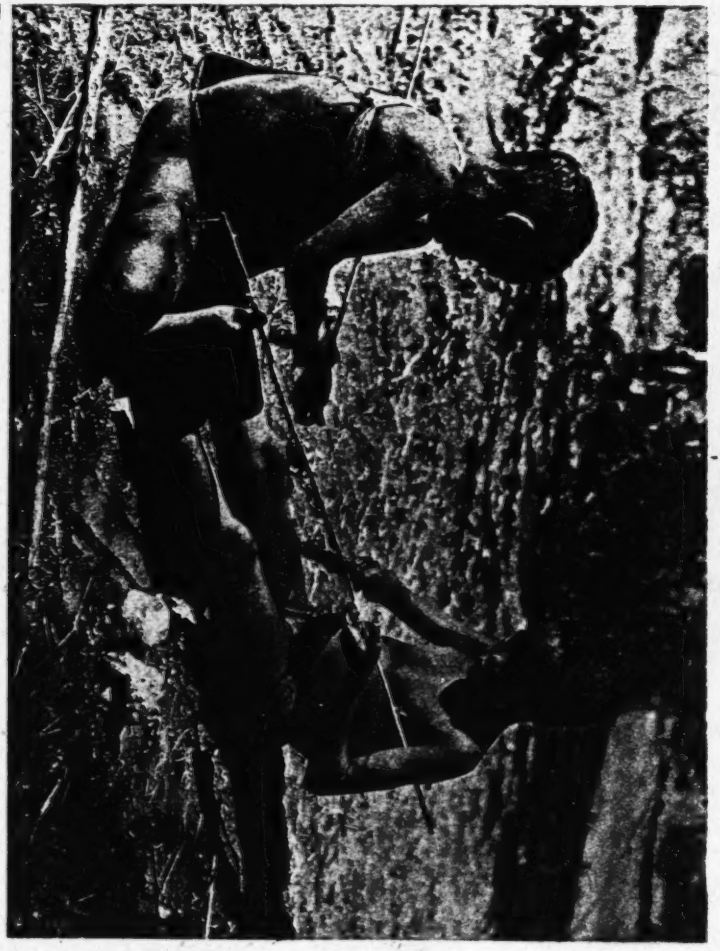

WOODEN WANDS ARE WHITTLED by pair of intent !Kung boys, in preparation for a children's game. Bounced off ground, the sticks sail through the air for yards. Woodworking and exercise from the game help to prepare future hunters.

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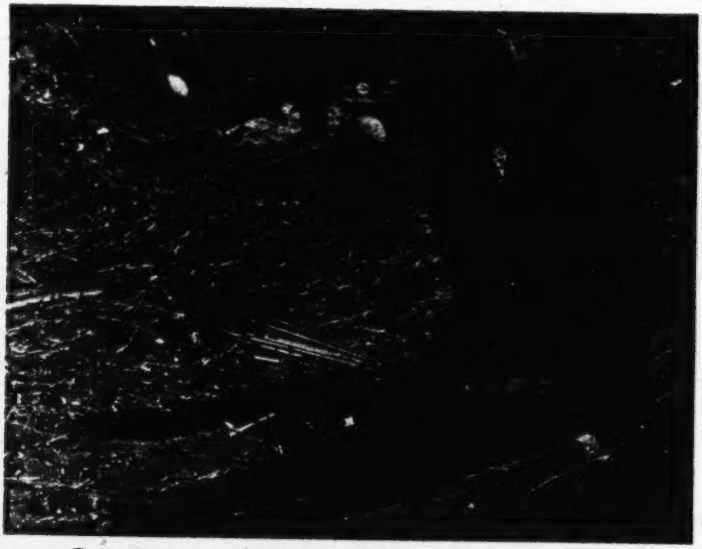

POISON IS SMEARED on arrow's metal foreshaft, but carefully cleaned away from point. Commonest poison is made of tree pods mashed with beetle grubs.

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484 food resources of *Nyae Nyae*. Instead, these are the *mangetti* and *tsi* nuts. Both are found only far from permanent water. Distance becomes more significant when one thinks not only of miles—but of time, footsteps, heat and carrying capacity. From the nearest western water, it is about twenty miles to a *mangetti* forest. The distance between *tsi* and the closest water is about seven miles. The
[481] people calculate their marching ability at about ten miles a day, with women and children, although men can make forty if necessary. They gather food as they travel, for a day of traveling is just like any other day, with children and old people to be provided for.

221 In order to exploit the environment successfully, with their limited technological equipment, the !Kung must move from place to place. The calendar of their movements is revealing. In winter, the people are forced to remain near the waterholes,

[p. 63]

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!KUNG ARROWS ARE SMALL and unfeathered, and the bow is light. But the powerful poison will kill a small buck in half a day and a giraffe in less than a week. Hunters make their own points, above, and can recognize one another's.

[p. 64]

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HUNTER'S TRAINING starts as childhood play, above, and !Kung youths will use anthills as targets and even stalk beetles as a game. Although their arrows are featherless,

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221 gathering in districts and making occasional trips to places where enough water-roots can be dug to support them for several days. When the "little rains" of spring come to *Nyae Nyae*, the land usually relents somewhat. Some of the small western and northern pans fill, and a hollow *mangetti* tree may have collected some water. The people, who keep track of conditions throughout *Nyae Nyae* from the reports of hunters and visitors, try to get to the *mangetti* forests as soon as possible, and bring

11:Marshall E-5 (1950-1955) 1958
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221 back as many nuts as they can carry.

THE "big rains" open the land. People travel to distant places and remove to the *mangetti* forests until autumn, when the *tsi* ripens. Then they remain in the *tsi* areas till the *tsi* nuts are exhausted—which sometimes happens before the small annual waters have evaporated—and finally make their way back to their permanent waterholes.

221 415 In such a transient life, the importance of light belongings—and

[p. 67]

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415 of ostrich eggshells for carrying water and skin bags for food—is evident. With carrying bags and ostrich eggshells, the people can bring water to food and food to water. Partly because of their life of motion, the !Kung do not accumulate heavy wealth.

847 Infanticide is uncommon among the !Kung, but one of the various reasons for the practice is that a woman may feel she cannot carry another child when the band moves. Then, the baby is born into a tiny grave near the *werft*, and the grave is closed.

[p. 68]

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Adult hunters can hit their quarry at fifty yards.

[p. 69]

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!Kung artist tries to express, but even means of reaching out to the infinite

in a state of trance that may range in the degree of disorder. The man being

supported, above, is in such a state. The !Kung believe that a man in trance

can take away a person's sickness and throw it back at the god who sent it.

[p.70]

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621 THAT the !Kung live in small bands, flexible in their composition and spread widely over their Kalahari world, is owing in good part to their environment and to the technological means by which they cope with it. But the effect of the environment, carrying through the technology, penetrates the structure of the bands themselves and influences the way in which the !Kung distribute themselves around their resources.

[p. 71]

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The headman of each band is considered to "own" a waterhole. What he is considered to "own," is both the water and the *veldkos* of the district. The ground itself is described as *chi dole*, worthless. Headmanship is hereditary, the headman being the oldest son of the previous headman although, if the male line is cut off for a generation, headmanship is passed through the eldest daughter to her eldest son. But head-

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622 manship is different from leadership,
554 which is not hereditary. Leadership depends heavily on a man's character, his hunting prowess, and especially his ability to focus people's opinions. Usually headman and leader are the same person but, should a headman be too young—perhaps still in his mother's womb—or very old, a band will have a separate leader.

622 Theoretically, the right to refuse
554 water to members of another band
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belongs to the headman, although we never saw this done nor did we ever hear of such a thing. Neither leadership nor headmanship implies any overt coercive power over the other members of a band. Only as a sort of coagulation of group opinion can headman or leaders exert a control —which, even then, is not final. The leader, being the kind of person to whom others come when decisions must be made, is often an arbiter, in

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WHEN THEY GATHER, the men are most likely to discuss hunting—the great exploits of memory, or plans for the future. For the chase is their passion.

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ORACLE DISKS, *bottom left*, are made from eland hide, in sets of five. The !Kung often use them to determine the direction of their next hunting foray.

[p. 75]

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YOUTH'S PLAY is not all purposive. Here, a young !Kung boy is happily engaged in nothing more important to his future than giving his sister a sled ride on the trampled floor of his band's *werft*, using a scrap of hide, hitched

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to a thong. When lived upon, the veld earth soon turns to dust, as seen here. In the rains of the coming year, the rank veld grass will have grown again across the floor of the deserted *scherft*—to toss in the passing, desert winds.

[p. 77]

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SEATED YOUTH, above, enjoys a smoke as his companions make characteristic !Kung gesture—arm outstretched—to show they also wish a turn with the pipe. Because the !Kung crave tobacco, but grow none, they must trade for it—often disastrously—with the Bantu peoples on the borders of *Nyae Nyae*.

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208 quarrels, a focal point in discussion of plans, a comfort to the bereaved and a strength for those in doubt.

621 The functions of headman, as
602 headman, are of a different nature. In order to take up residence with a band, a person must have certain ties of kin with members of the band.
[591] Such a person may live with his own parents or siblings, or with his wife's parents or siblings. It is a wide choice, providing for flexibility—but within limits. There are, of course, exceptions, and visitors from other bands are never denied, but possession of some kinship tie seems to be a general requirement for residence which,

11:Marshall E-5 (1950-1955) 1958
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602 if violated, would subject the violator to criticism by the band.

626 SHORT of fighting, all the !Kung can do to control the actions of individuals is to criticize. But this is apparently enough. A man, expelled from his band, *might* be able to survive alone in the desert—with luck, he might even manage for years. If he could persuade his family to come with him, they might survive together even more easily, for the family is the basic subsistence unit. But freshly gone, he would be an outlaw and, in time, become a stranger to his people. This would be an unthinkable

626 horror to a !Kung! The worst dream might be to see the fires flickering in the *werft* at midnight and be unable to go to them. All the people we knew could tell us of only one time when such a departure from the group occurred: and the man had gone insane, [158] had murdered and then run raving into the veld. There he had lived for a little while in a hole, then died.

622 It is in connection with the need to live widely spread over the land 423 that the !Kung headman's functions are peculiar. There is one essential qualification to headmanship, in addition to heredity. A headman cannot leave his waterhole to join another

11:Marshall E-5 (1950-1955) 1958
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423 band and still remain a headman, for he, in his person, does not possess headmanship. It is only when a person is *born* headman, and in association with his waterhole, that he assumes the full authority of headmanship. We have seen that headmen were considered to "own" the water and *veldkos* of a district. I believe this association is another way of expressing what the !Kung mean by "own": the headman is the symbol of a place.

In the same manner that a headman "owns" a district, he also "owns" other geographical features of the country. These include pans that fill during the rains, *veldkos*

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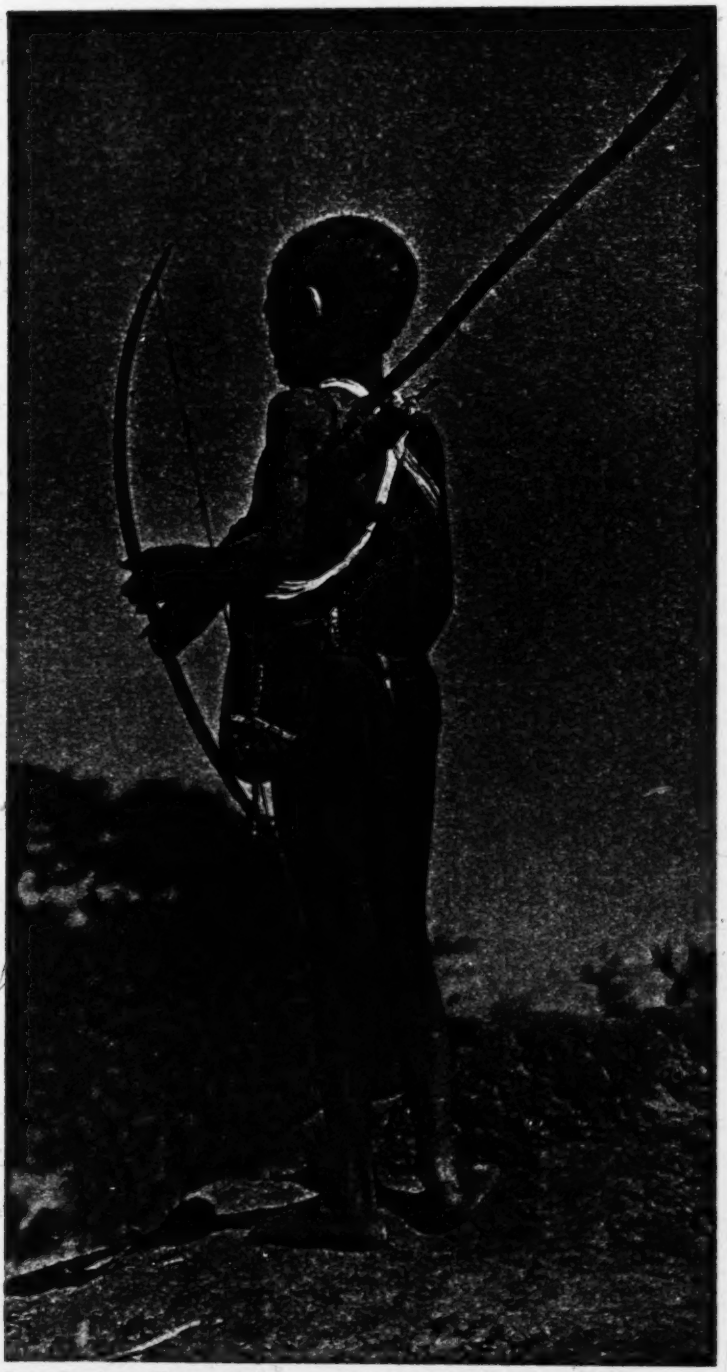

BEFORE MARRIAGE, !Kung youths have few responsibilities. But the hunt is in their blood and it is a proud boy who kills his first buck early in life.

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!Kung parents cherish the children to raise. A mother, above, fits ornamental headband to her small daughter. their harsh environment permits them

FATHERS TAKE PRIDE in their growing sons, to whom will pass both the task of hunting for the band and the many skills and traditions of !Kung hunters.

[p. 84]

622 areas, baobab trees, and—most im-
423 portant—*mangetti* trees that hold water in their trunks, and *tsi* areas. It is these "owned" features, and the direction from the waterhole in which they lie, that define a territory. Since, as we have seen, *mangetti*'s and *tsi* are the most important !Kung resources, they are the main determinants of a direction.

But animals are *not* owned. Neatly bounded sections of the countryside are *not* owned. A territory, therefore can best be defined as the combination of a permanent waterhole and a direction: the !Kung so define it by the word "side." One headman's territory is said to be on this "side."

361 JUST as the Kalahari's scant re-
621 sources of food and water are dis-
622 tributed in accordance with a geographical pattern, the !Kung bands are distributed in accordance with both a geographical and a social pattern. Natural resources are the focal points in the geographical pattern of band distribution: headmen are the focal points in the social pattern. In a sense, headmen tie together the two patterns, the concept of headmanship being the embodiment of a certain quantity of resources in a person around whom a band can take shape and operate. Because of their kin ties with a headman, the people living round him, clustering their *skerms* around his and moving with him over his territory, feel right in being where they are.

622 The headman receives no special
554 privileges. He is no more wealthy than other men. If he is a leader, he may assume responsibility and speak out. But, as headman, he need not speak, for headmanship is a silent office and while the headman lives—by his waterhole or out somewhere on his territory with his band—he serves his whole purpose.

423 Most of the permanent waterholes
312 have two !Kung bands associated with them, and the *tsi* areas are likewise shared by bands from the same and different waterholes. Such sharing may come about because two brothers (only one of whom may be the true headman) live together and feel they possess joint claims. It may come about through the passage of time, which confuses genealogies and lets claims, once tenuous, become firm through usage. The !Kung are a people of present tense, living—in their minds as well as with their

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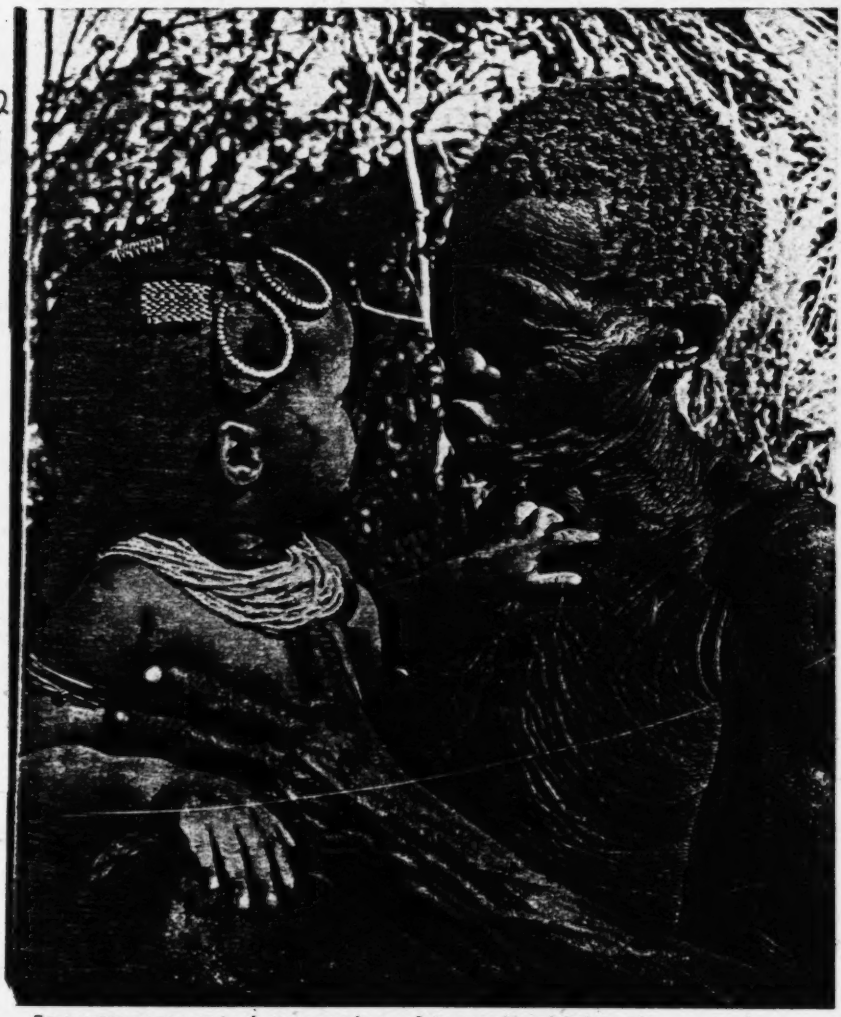

THE ROAD FROM YOUTH TO AGE is a short one among these desert dwellers, as witness the father and daughter here. It is a sparse life, and the hunter who can count twelve antelope killed in a year feels he has had a good season.

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11: Marshall E-5 (1950-1955) 1958 FX10 Bushmen FX10
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HAPPY LIFE of children includes such moments as these: a laughing game of "pull-away," above.

423 bodies—from day to day. If the water-
312 holes were not shared, some bands would be without permanent water.

621 Not all !Kung territories are of equal value in terms of food and
166 water. Some people have *mangetti* nuts, some have *tsi*, and some have
361 both. There is mild wealth, and gentle poverty in *Nyae Nyae*. Territories also change in value year by year. The rains may fail in some parts of *Nyae Nyae*, and fall in others. In normal years, *mangetti*'s in the north may become available earlier in the season than those of the western forests. Because of the flexibility of band composition, the bands gathering *mangetti*'s in such a favored area are enlarged by people who would otherwise have to wait.

This is usually a temporary situation, the newcomers having more the status of guests than members of the bands. Often, whole bands—headman and all—will visit kin in this manner. During years of dessication, the fact that a person has several choices of bands in which to live becomes vital to him—he can move from a hopeless place to perhaps a better one.

BY such means, balance works out between the desert's resources and the numbers and distribution of !Kung who exploit them. No one district or *mangetti* forest could support more than a limited number of people. Only certain people possess the necessary kinship qualifications to join a band. The flexibility of their

[p. 87]

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166 composition enables bands to swell during lean years, while the concept of association, through a headman, to a district and a territory provides for the distribution of people throughout the barren land.

If a band were confined strictly to one territory, or could use the resources of another territory only over the bodies of the band that lived there, there would be many less *Nyae Nyae* !Kung—perhaps none at all.

823 The !Kung give various reasons for their preference of the territory they consider home. For some, it is where they were born. For others, it is where they spent their youth. And for some, it is where they are waiting in their old age. Hunters say they must know their territories—every pan and stretch of bush, every unusual tree—and they say that to amass such knowledge takes years. An old man we met while he was visiting for a few days from the west, said that the weather was more gentle in Debera, the place where he lived, and that, moreover, "there are no stones in Debera ground."

Early one autumn morning, blue and sweet, when dawn air was still fragile on our faces, a close !Kung friend stood beside me in /Gautcha Territory, looking across a pan that still smiled with water despite the late season. It was the pan where he had come, as a young man, to live with his bride. We were quiet, waiting for the rising sun. "/Gautcha is beautiful," he said.

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[P.89]